

A GOLD PENDANT IN THE VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

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An Early Byzantine gold pendant in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is an unusual piece that exemplifies its period in both form and content.¹ The Richmond pendant belongs to the category of numismatic jewelry because it incorporates medalllic themes, as well as coin types, in a unique composition: a central image with close links to medallions and an outer border employing motifs typically found on coins. It is a transitional piece in the peculiar adaptation of the classical antecedents of such jewelry. This is also true of its central image, a female personification, which represents a blending of several classical types. The subject matter of the pendant offers the most telling implications in terms of the development of Early Byzantine art and taste. The first part of the discussion focuses on the iconography of the central personification which finds most of its comparisons in the Greek East. The technique and historical context of the piece make clear the lack of exact parallels, but firmly suggest a provenance in the northern fringes of the Byzantine Empire.

Two sheets of gold foil are folded over a resin filling, creating a large medallion pendant (diam. 8.9 cm) with decoration on both sides (Figs. 1 and 2).² In the center of the front is a medallion with

a bust of a winged female, enclosed by a thin notched band and a wider plain border outlined by beading that is, in turn, framed by a band of twelve smaller medallions, also outlined by beading. The four smaller medallions on the axes have equal-armed crosses with engraved leaves between their flaring arms; the other eight contain the bust of an emperor in profile, resembling the obverse of a coin. The back of the pendant is engraved with an eight-pointed star, each segment of which is filled with a stylized leaf pattern executed in broad, shallow grooves (Fig. 2). The pendant is fitted with two loops at the top, presumably for suspension.

The central bust figure (Fig. 3) is a familiar image of late Antiquity. This winged figure, first identified as the Archangel Michael,³ is actually a female personification who holds up a cloth filled with fruits in front of her chest. She has a full rounded face with large oval eyes that stare out at us. Her hair is parted in the middle and falls down in long locks over her shoulders.

The Richmond bust calls to mind three different kinds of bust personifications: one that represents a season, another an abstraction, and another the earth. In classical times these three types were distinct. However, the difficulty in interpreting the central image on this medallion is in itself revealing as a problem of late antique art. Female figures who bear fruits commonly personify the seasons of Summer and Autumn. Busts of these personifications enjoyed a particularly long vogue in the art of mosaic, that is, from the mid-second century to the late fourth century A.D. in African pavements, and from the late first century until the sixth cen-

¹The pendant (acc. no. 66.76) was purchased in consultation with Marvin Ross from the Galerie Charpentier in 1966; see M. M. Rheims, *Trésors d'or: Collection de bijoux et de monnaies*, Nov. 26, 1956, no. 47, with illustration. See also M. Ross, "Jewels of Byzantium," *Arts in Virginia* 9, no. 1 (1968) 25, no. 30, pl. on p. 24; and *Art of the Late Antique from American Collections: An Exhibition at the Rose Art Museum*, Brandeis University (Waltham, 1968), cat. no. 55, pl. 24. I would like to thank Mr. Pinkney Near, chief curator of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, for his permission to publish this piece and for his generous assistance.

²The medallion is filled with a brittle, whitish material, seemingly a natural resin. It appears to be the same type of filling used as a backing for the gold solidus of Constantine in a circular medallion at Dumbarton Oaks; see K. Weitzmann, ed., *Age of Spirituality* (New York, 1979), 304, no. 276. I am grateful

to Arthur Beale who generously shared the results of his examination of the Dumbarton Oaks piece with me.

³Ross first made this identification; see above, note 1.

tury in the Greek East.⁴ For this reason, the mosaic series offers the largest group of comparisons with which to identify the Richmond bust. The addition of the wings, occurring as early as the second century in both the East and the West, unfortunately does not provide any internal evidence for dating or provenance.⁵ It is true that the earlier Seasons are usually in three-quarter view, while the busts after the fifth century are frontal.⁶

The gesture of carrying the fruit in a fold of the tunic or cloth held in both hands narrows the range of comparisons and indicates a plausible identity for the Richmond figure. Although full figures, either standing⁷ or sitting,⁸ employ this attitude, no bust of a Season does. It occurs on mosaics found in a fifth-century villa in Palestine and in three sixth-century churches in Transjordan where the image is identified by inscription as Ge, or Earth.⁹ In these cases the bust no longer represents a single season but rather a personification of earthly abundance. It clearly derives from mosaics where such a bust is surrounded by the four seasons, as in a fourth-century house in Apamea or in a fifth-century villa in Antioch.¹⁰ In both these examples, Earth is identified by inscription and holds

⁴D. Parrish, *Season Mosaics of Roman North Africa* (Rome, 1984), 21. The evolution of the type through Antiquity is discussed by D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements* (Princeton, 1947) (hereafter AMP), 231 ff.

⁵Levi, AMP, 234, esp. note 44, rejects G. Downey's suggestion that wings represent the Christianization of the Seasons. See also Parrish, *Season Mosaics*, 21 note 34, who lists the examples from Africa with wings; and for a more recently excavated eastern example, see J. Balty, *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie* (Brussels, 1977), 72–75, nos. 31–32.

⁶Balty, *Mosaïques*, 74.

⁷For example, the Seasons in the "Constantinian Villa" at Daphne are winged, full-standing figures bearing offerings of their respective seasons gathered in cloths below their chests; see Levi, AMP, pl. 55, a; and F. Baratte, *Mosaïques romaines et paléochrétiens du musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1978), 107–10, figs. 115–18.

⁸For example, the two reclined Seasons from the "Palais des Saisons" in Carthage; see Parrish, *Season Mosaics*, 120–22, no. 12, pl. 21.

⁹For a general discussion of these figures of Terra, see A. Grabar, "Recherches sur les sources juive de l'art paléochrétien," *CahArch* 12 (1962), 199 ff; and K. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa* (Oxford, 1978), 231. The 5th-century example was found in Beit Jibrin or Govrin; see M. Avi-Yonah, "Mosaic Pavements in Palestine," *Ancient Art in Palestine: Selected Studies* (Jerusalem, 1981), 293–95, note 23, pl. 49; and E. Kitzinger, *Israeli Mosaics*, UNESCO (New York, 1965), 16. The 6th-century examples are from the nave mosaics in the Churches of Priest John and St. George, Nebo (see S. Saller and B. Bagatti, *The Town of Nebo* [Jerusalem, 1949], 50–53, pl. 8, and 69–71, pls. 22, 3; 23, 3) and from Madaba.

¹⁰For Apamea, Balty, *Mosaïques*, 72–75, nos. 31–32, from the "triclinos" dated to the third quarter of the 4th century; and for Antioch, Levi, AMP, 346–47, pl. 81, from the House of Ge and the Seasons, upper level, dated to the late 5th century.

a gold cornucopia filled with fruits. Interestingly, the accompanying Seasons are winged busts, thereby providing an important stage in the transposition of the bust type with fruits from its temporal context to a more generalized meaning. Even earlier, in the "Constantinian Villa" at Antioch, busts of Ktisis, Ananeosis, Eyandria, and Dynamis are coupled with seasonal activities and are placed directly below the full-standing winged Seasons in the corners, revealing the complex schemes from which these busts were excerpted.¹¹ The conflation of seasonal offerings with these more abstract personifications is evidenced in the nave mosaic of a Justinianic church in Qasr-el-Lebia, Cyrenaica, where Ananeosis is represented as a bust bearing fruits.¹² Finally, the image was taken by the Umayyads in the eighth century for a floor fresco in Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, where it is meant to represent the Earth.¹³ By the Early Byzantine period, this figure type was clearly understood as Ge in the koine of Mediterranean art.

Three ivory plaques engraved with winged busts mark the use of such figures, borrowed from the popular repertoire of the Seasons in monumental art, as decorative motifs for luxury items.¹⁴ They are dated from the fourth to the sixth centuries and identified as personifications of the Seasons.¹⁵ The only one to survive intact is from the Benaki Museum in Athens (Fig. 4).¹⁶ She retains her headdress and, although schematically rendered, it ap-

¹¹Baratte, *Mosaïques*, 99–103, figs. 98–100.

¹²E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum, *Justinianic Mosaic Pavements in Cyrenaican Churches* (Rome, 1980), 33–37, pl. 5.

¹³R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* (Geneva[?], 1962), 34–35, pl. 35; and Grabar, "Recherches," 174, pl. 176b. The presence of a pearl frame around the Islamic Ge suggests that the intermediary model may have been a portable object, such as a piece of jewelry or textile.

¹⁴See below, Fig. 5 and note 38, for another example of the Seasons iconography appearing on personal luxury items.

¹⁵Two are fragmentary, but enough is preserved to confirm the identification. The first is in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin; see O. Wulff, *Beschreibung der Bildwerke der christlichen Epochen*, I, 2 (Berlin, 1909), 105, no. 351, pl. 14, inv. no. 3771, said to be from Alexandria, Egypt, and dated by Wulff to the 4th or 5th century. The second was formerly in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mallon; see *Early Christian and Byzantine Art: An Exhibition* (Baltimore, 1947), 55, no. 193, pl. 19, also said to be Alexandrian and dated to the 6th century. For a discussion of this group, see J. Strzygowski, *Hellenistische und koptische Kunst in Alexandria* (Vienna, 1902), 12–15, figs. 9 and 10, who identifies these winged figures as Christian angels.

¹⁶See *Byzantine Art: An European Art. Ninth Exhibition Held under the Auspices of the Council of Europe* (Athens, 1964), 150, no. 36; and *L'art copte: Petite Palais*, Paris (Paris, 1964), 65, no. 19, pl. on p. 64, inv. no. 10356, where it is assigned to the 6th century and obviously to Egypt. I would like to thank Dr. Laskarina Bouras, curator at the Benaki Museum, for allowing me to publish this photograph.

pears to be a *kalathos* just as Ge wears in the mosaic from Apamea. The ivory ladies hold up their draperies in which are gathered tiny round fruits, highlighted by indentations. Exactly the same gesture occurs on our gold medallion, and the same technique is used for depicting similarly round fruits. The presence of the *kalathos* indicates that we are meant to read these ivory images as representations of Earth with specific allusion to her fertility and abundance.¹⁷

In the case of the Richmond bust, this interpretation of Abundantia is further specified by the accompanying border of pseudocoins impressions. The use of the Seasons and Tellus/Ge on the reverse of imperial coins since the Hadrianic period essentially guaranteed that, even when Ge appeared alone and as a half-figure, she would symbolize Fecunditas, Temporum Felicitas, Tellus Stabilitas—numismatic inscriptions meant to associate the reigning emperor with the bounty of the Earth and world order.¹⁸

Tellus appears on imperial coins and medallions in a reclined position holding various attributes that allude to her agrarian fecundity and is often accompanied by the Seasons or *karpoi*. Mosaics, once again, shed light on the transformation of Tellus proper into the late antique version of Ge found on our pendant. On the floor of an apsed room in Carthage, winged females recline in a rocky landscape, each nimbed figure holding the fruit of her Season within her cloak.¹⁹ Their positions and gestures directly connect them to numismatic representations of Tellus. Since the Carthage mosaics are dated by archeological evidence to the early fourth century, the integration of Tellus and seasonal figures must have been well established by then. Once assimilated, Tellus/Ge was easily adapted to the winged bust formula.

This brief examination of the evolution of seasonal imagery confirms the identification of the Richmond bust as Ge, and suggests a thematic con-

¹⁷For a discussion of this attribute and its meaning, see Balty, *Mosaïques*, 74.

¹⁸For a general discussion of this iconography on coins, see G. M. A. Hanfmann, *The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks* (Cambridge, 1951), I, 178 ff and II, nos. 78, 79, 425–29, fig. 109; and J. M. C. Toynbee, “Roman Medallions,” *Numismatic Studies* 5 (1944), 73 ff, esp. 90–93, for such themes on Roman medallion issues. For specific examples, see H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, II, 3rd ed. (London, 1968), 324 ff, where Hadrianic reverse types showing Tellus or Abundantia standing or reclined with cornucopiae are listed; and for medallions, see F. Gnechi, *I medagliioni romani*, I, 2nd ed. (Bologna, 1972), chart on pp. 46–47.

¹⁹See note 8 above.

nnection with the imagery on imperial coinage. The presence of the four crosses on our gold medallion permits a Christian reading so that the blessings of the Seasons, the beneficence of the emperor, and his peaceful dominion are now endorsed by Christ through the person of the emperor, represented in profile eight times. The “fruit-bearing Mother” offers the riches of the Lord’s fields, and the Christianization of this secular theme is complete.

The use of coins and medallions as personal ornaments is well documented by many luxurious pieces of ancient jewelry.²⁰ In the late antique and Byzantine periods such pieces were often imitated, and the monetary value of the gold medallion or coin was superseded by its decorative function.²¹ The Richmond pendant is a transitional piece in the development of metallic jewelry. It stands between those examples that incorporate actual commemorative issues or gold coins in an ornamental setting, favored in the Roman era, and those with invented themes, often Christian, cast in a pseudomedalllic form from the Early Byzantine period. The pendant is significant for the relationship between coinage and art and the absorption of the officially inspired iconography of coins for objects of private use, as was demonstrated in the iconographic discussion above.

The cross and imperial busts repeated in the outer medallions of the Richmond pendant offer evidence for dating, technique, and provenance. When Marvin Ross first published the pendant he suggested that these smaller medallions “were made by being pressed over a small coin of a type

²⁰R. A. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewelry* (London, 1961), 181, suggests that the use of imperial coins and medallions in jewelry was a practice introduced in the 2nd century. For the best survey of this category of jewelry, see C. Vermeule, “Numismatics in Antiquity: The Preservation and Display of Coins in Ancient Greece and Rome,” *Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau* 54 (1975), 5–32. For an earlier discussion, see Toynbee, “Roman Medallions,” 118 ff. Among the sources mentioning this custom, see Pomponius, *Digest* 7.1.28 and Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 19.31, 10 ff.

²¹For a review of Byzantine metallic art, see M. Ross, “A Byzantine Gold Medallion at Dumbarton Oaks,” *DOP* 11 (1957), 253–59. For several outstanding examples, see Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, nos. 61, 62, 276, and 296, pp. 71–74, 304, and 319–21; A. Greifenhagen, *Schmuckarbeiten in Edelmetall*, I (Berlin, 1970), 65–76, pls. 45–48, 52–55; and A. Grabar, “Un médaillon de Mersine,” *DOP* 6 (1951), 27–49, esp. fig. 10 which illustrates a figure wearing a large pendant from the Arch of Septimius Severus in Lepcis Magna. For an example of this practice in barbarian jewelry, see G. Becatti, *Oreficerie antiche* (Rome, 1955), 221, nos. 535, 574, 576; and R. Noll, *Katalog der antiken Sammlung I: Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Vienna, 1974), 69–70, pls. 20 and 41, for a German treasure from the second half of the 4th century with mounted medallions and pseudomedallions.

... of the time of Justin II (A.D. 565–578). . . ."22 The absence of inscriptions, however, indicates that the original itself was not a coin, but simply based on the conventional obverse formula of late Roman coins, that is, the diademed emperor in profile wearing a cuirass and mantle. The four equal-armed crosses, taken in the context of these obverse types, might be inspired by a reverse coin design. Equal-armed crosses occur on Justinianic mints, but the preference for the cross as a reverse type can be directly linked to the reign of Tiberius Constantine (A.D. 578–582).²³ However, these crosses, often set on steps or globes, are quite different in form from those on our pendant. In fact, the closest parallel occurs on the reverse of a seventh-century pendant in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection whose decoration also bears similarities to that found on the reverse of the Richmond pendant.²⁴ The use of the four crosses in conjunction with the imperial profile that corresponds to types appearing in coinage from the fifth through the seventh centuries suggests a date in the sixth or seventh century. Unfortunately, the general treatment of the bust precludes a more specific identification.²⁵

The schematic nature of the bust design is reminiscent of the imitative coinage struck by barbarian tribes from the fifth century onward.²⁶ In ad-

²²Ross, "Jewels of Byzantium," 30, no. 30, credits Prof. Alfred Bellinger with the coin identification.

²³See A. R. Bellinger and P. Grierson, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, I (Washington, D.C., 1966), 191, pl. 48, for an equal-armed cross with stars in between on a decanummium of Justinian I (A.D. 538–565), and 348, no. 191, a half-follis of Maurice. For a border of large pellets, similar to the decoration found on the outer medallions of our piece, see *ibid.*, pl. 49, an aureus of Justin II. For a discussion of the cross design on the reverse, see *ibid.*, II, 95–99, esp. table 10, showing the various cross types; and W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Imperial Byzantine Coins in the British Museum*, I (London, 1908), 107, pl. 16, no. 17AV. Equal-armed crosses do occur as reverse types in a coin hoard found in the purse from the Sutton Hoo treasure dated to the early 7th century; see J. P. C. Kent and K. S. Painter, *Wealth of the Roman World, A.D. 300–700* (London, 1977), 135, nos. 250–91, color pl.; the schematic profiles on the obverses are worth noting in relation to the eight medallions on the Richmond pendant.

²⁴See note 48 below.

²⁵Contrary to Ross and Bellinger (see above, note 23), I do not see how the schematic profiles of the outer medallions can be distinguished from a long series of such profiles and be so certainly identified with Justin II. For a series of profiles that are similar to the Richmond examples, see M. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, II (hereafter *Cat. II*) (Washington, D.C., 1965), 44–46, no. 46, pls. 26–27, where a pair of gold bracelets is set with coins of Maurice Tiberius, Phocas, and Heraclius.

²⁶For a general discussion of late Roman coinage, including many barbarian examples, see Kent and Painter, *Wealth of the*

dition, the technique of pressing with thin gold foil was a popular method of reproduction in the frontier regions of the empire. The wide appeal of metallic pieces, undoubtedly fostered by the barbarian chiefs who were given originals as gifts by emperors, encouraged such methods of reproduction.²⁷ Once again, the relationship of the Richmond pendant to commemorative issues, perhaps barbarian in origin, might be indicated by its metallic form, material, and technique.

The imitation of Roman medallions by pressing gold on a matrix of wood or resin was commonly practiced in the production of gold bracteates of the Migration period from northern Germany and western Scandinavia.²⁸ Over eight hundred examples of these gold pseudomedallions survive from the fifth through the seventh centuries, providing a rich series of comparisons for our medallion. Their technique, schematic figural style, and function—they were set with loops, presumably to be worn as amulets—recall the Richmond piece. However, the majority of bracteates are decorated with male busts and animal representations, in contrast to our central female personification. A harness piece from Germany, obviously related in its technique and style to the bracteates, features the enthroned Virgin and Child on one side and St. George on the other.²⁹ Encircled by a notched and then pearly border, the bold relief bears a noteworthy resemblance to our medallion. Its find-spot, a male grave in Hüfingen, and its assigned date, A.D. 600, reveal a funerary function and period fashion that transcends regional boundaries.

The fragility of the thin foil used in the pressing process would seem to preclude everyday use. Certainly, the Richmond pendant, with its paper-thin foil, could not have withstood handling. The occurrence of similarly fragile gold foil crosses in the

Roman World, 159 ff, esp. 160–62, 173–82, and for profiles similar to the Richmond ones, see 176, no. 598, Suevian, late 5th century; 177, nos. 609 and 616, mint of Milan-kingdom of Odovacar; 178, no. 655, mint of the Burgundians; 179, no. 662, mint of the Vandals; and 181, no. 743, Spanish mint of Heraclius.

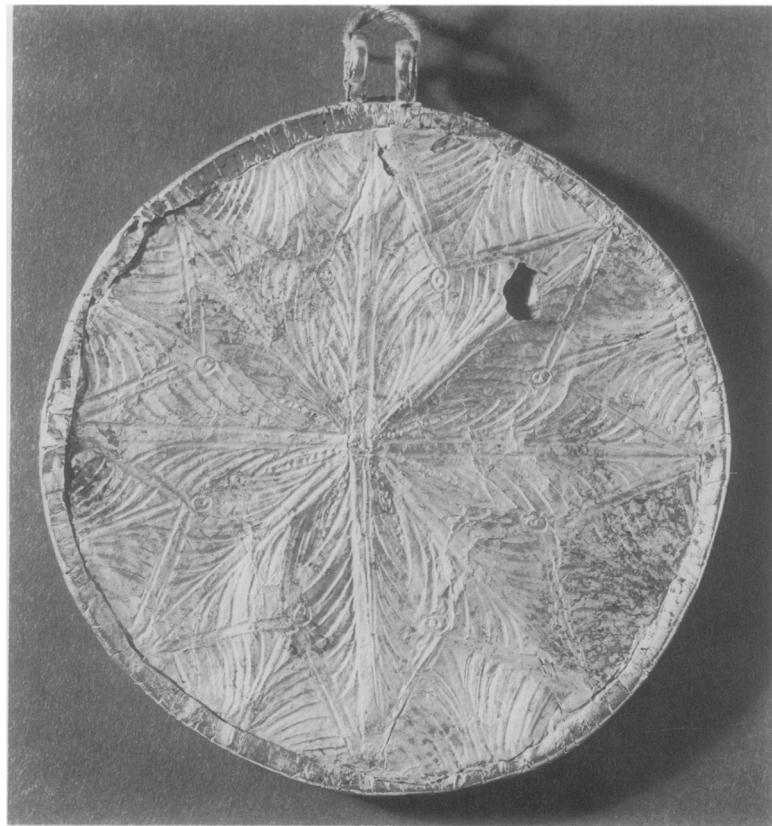
²⁷See the often-quoted passage in *Hist. Franc.* 6.2, where Gregory of Tours recounts King Chilperic of the Franks proudly displaying the gold medallions sent by Tiberius Constantine (A.D. 578–582). See also Procopius' account of gifts of jewelry and money distributed by General Belisarius to his soldiers, Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 319.

²⁸See H. Roth, *Kunst der Völkerwanderungszeit* (Frankfurt, 1979), 252–53, nos. 188–89 and pls.; also, M. Axboe and B. Arrhenius, "On the Manufacture of the Gold Bracteates," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 16 (1982), 302–18.

²⁹See Roth, *op. cit.*, 296, no. 268a/b, now in the Badisches Museum in Karlsruhe; it is made of silver-plated iron.



1. Gold pendant, front (acc. no. 66.76)
(photo: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)



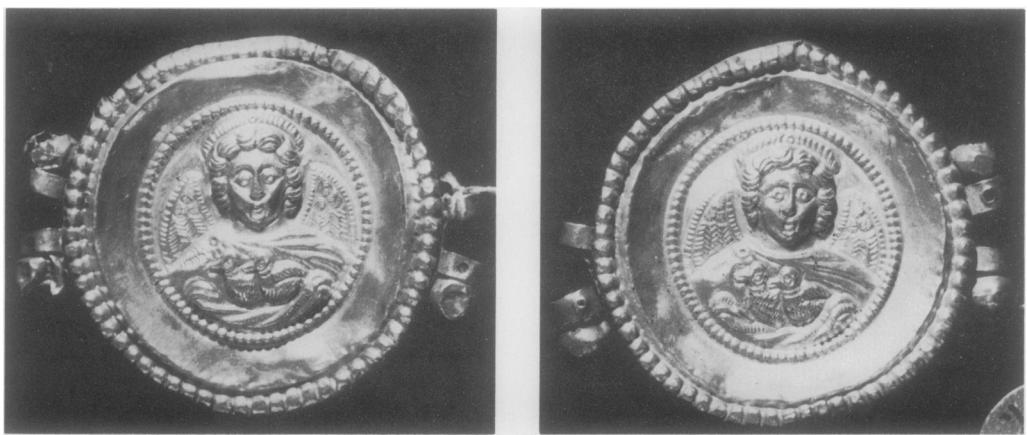
2. Gold pendant, reverse
(photo: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)



3. Detail of Figure 1



4. Ivory plaque (inv. no. 10356) (photo: Benaki Museum)



5. Pair of gold medallions (inv. nos. 27.460.1 and .2) (photo: Egyptian Museum, Cairo)



6. Garnet pendant and gold clasps, reverse, Olbia Treasure (acc. no. 40.1.1)
(photo: Dumbarton Oaks Collection)

graves of Lombardy is suggestive, particularly because many of the faces on these crosses are decorated with pressings made over coins.³⁰ These crosses, mainly found in graves dating from the last third of the sixth century through the mid-seventh century, underline the popularity of this technique and material for funerary objects.³¹ It has also been noted that the use of gold foil for funerary decorations enjoyed a long vogue in the Greek East.³² Items of jewelry executed in the most elaborate designs also accompanied the dead.³³ That such pieces of jewelry were worn as amulets in life, as well as in death, is clear from inscriptions on them, such as "Lord help the wearer," or "Health."³⁴ It is highly probable that our medallion was worn by the deceased to invoke the protection and blessings of Ge, the emperor, and Christ—a prophylactic triad suited to the syncretic beliefs of late Antiquity.

The finest examples of late antique medallic jewelry have been found in Egypt, especially in the treasure supposedly from the area near Assiût in Upper Egypt.³⁵ These pieces, although of far higher quality, share several features with the Richmond pendant. Barbaric imitations of coins and medallions are juxtaposed with original coins in the most elegant settings, attesting to the acceptance of pseudocoins in the jewelry of the highest

³⁰ For the most recent and thorough treatment, see W. Hübener, ed., *Die Goldblattkreuze des frühen Mittelalters* (Bühl-Baden, 1975), *passim*, see esp. pls. 17, 26, 2, and 27, 2 for coin impressions. Besides the technique and material, the decorative repertoire found on the crosses, including interlace, zoomorphic representations, and male busts, reflects a parallel to the bracteates. See G. Haseloff, "Zu den Goldblattkreuzen aus dem Raum nördlich der Alpen," in Hübener, *op. cit.*, 63, and on the ornament, 38–59.

³¹ On the role of these Lombard and German crosses as votive gifts, see H. Vierck, "Folienkreuze als Votivgaben," in Hübener, *op. cit.*, 125–43.

³² K. Weidemann, "'Byzantinische' Goldblattkreuze," in Hübener, *op. cit.*, 145–49, esp. 147–48.

³³ For example, Weidemann, *op. cit.*, 147–48, who describes a gold necklace from the Fayum in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (see Ross, *Cat. II*, 16–17, no. 11, pls. 18–19) as far too delicate in its construction for practical use and suggests that it was a funerary decoration. It is also interesting to note the gold foil casings used for a series of coins on a 3rd-century necklace from Aleppo, now in Berlin, which are quite similar to the Virginia pendant's construction; see Greifenhagen, *Schmuckarbeiten*, 73–74, pl. 53.

³⁴ For example, the central medallion of the Berlin pectoral, from Assiût in Upper Egypt, contains the Greek inscription, "Lord, help the wearer" (see Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 319, no. 296); and the Greek word for "health" appears on the twenty small medallions of the necklace and *encolpion* from Mersine, now in Leningrad, *ibid.*, 73, no. 62.

³⁵ For the most thorough treatment of this treasure, see Greifenhagen, above, note 21; and W. Dennison, *A Gold Treasure of the Late Roman Period* (New York, 1918), *passim*.

level of craftsmanship. In some of these examples, the images were freehand imitations of an obverse type.³⁶ Perhaps such creations provided a source for the smaller medallions on our pendant. Many of the medallic pieces found in this treasure are decorated with beaded borders and a trefoil motif in the interstices between the coins. Globular versions of a three-petaled ornament occur between the smaller medallions of the Richmond piece at their outer edges; single pellets are set between these same medallions along their inside border. The use of trefoils to join the coins marks the entire series from Assiût and suggests a common place of execution for the whole treasure—according to Ross, Constantinople or Egypt in the first half of the seventh century.³⁷

Another pair of gold medallions from Egypt offers a closer parallel to our pendant than the Assiût examples in that the frontal male busts are winged and bear offerings at chest-level (Fig. 5).³⁸ Each bust, wearing a mantle fastened at the right shoulder with a fibula, holds two ducks in a gathered cloth. The type clearly derives from the representation of Winter, who is nearly always wrapped in a mantle and associated with attributes of the hunt, in this case ducks.³⁹ These gold medallions, once decorating bracelets or a belt, join the Richmond pendant as evidence for the use of Season-derived images in jewelry. In addition, the two beaded moldings, the facial features, and the design of the wings also recall aspects of our pendant.⁴⁰ The execution of the facial features, espe-

³⁶ For example, the central medallion of the pectoral from Assiût, now in the Metropolitan Museum, which has been attributed to a Longobardic goldsmith by J. P. C. Kent (see Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 318, no. 295), and the male busts on a pair of gold bracelets, below, note 41.

³⁷ Ross, *Cat. II*, 45–46, no. 46, uses the gold coins on a pair of gold bracelets to attribute the whole Assiût treasure to the first half of the 7th century. The observation about the trefoils was made first by Dennison, *Gold Treasure*, 100; and by Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 320.

³⁸ I would like to thank Dr. Mohamed Saleh, Director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, for his kind permission to publish these medallions (acc. nos. 27.460.1 and 27.460.2). I would also like to thank Prof. Anna Gonosová for first mentioning these unpublished medallions to me.

³⁹ A close parallel, although wingless, is offered by the male bust representing Winter (Cheimon) from the Villa of the Seasons (Hagios Taxiarchis) at Argos, who bears two wild ducks and fishes; see G. Akerström-Hougen, *The Calendar and Hunting Mosaics of the Villa of the Falconer in Argos: A Study in Early Byzantine Iconography* (Stockholm, 1974), 128, pl. 10, who dates it to the early 6th century A.D. See also the full running figure representing February from a mosaic in Thebes, *ibid.*, 140, fig. 77, 3.

⁴⁰ The upper part of the wings is filled with a leaf motif and the lower part with a herringbone pattern. This is far less legible on the Richmond Ge.

cially the fullness of the cheeks, the oval sunken eyes, and the short, pursed lips, recalls our Ge.⁴¹ However, the Richmond piece, while ambitiously detailed, lacks the clarity of definition and the convincing plasticity of these Egyptian medallions.⁴² While the subject of Ge suggests an eastern provenance for the Richmond piece, it is at least once removed from these elegant and more precisely articulated works found in Egypt. Similarities with the Egyptian treasures bespeak an international taste for such pieces that might have ultimately derived from Constantinople.

The jewelry parallels cited thus far employ male busts. However, female busts were also used for medallions. Several Roman ones featured the head of Medusa, undoubtedly intended as an apotropaic symbol.⁴³ In late Antiquity, Tyche and other personifications in bust form adorn jewelry. Lombardy, Vandal Africa, and South Russia have all yielded examples of such allegorical decorations.⁴⁴ The piece from Lombardy, a fibula that was found on a young girl's corpse, reinforces the suggestion that our pendant could have been part of a woman's funerary garb. Most of these female busts, aside from the Medusa, recall the frontal busts of an empress.

Although our Ge differs from these personifications in that she derives from the repertoire of the Seasons, there are similarities in technique and meaning. Two sixth-century pieces made from thin sheets of pressed gold—like the Richmond pendant—feature a female bust wearing a turreted

⁴¹ See also a pair of gold bracelets from the Assiût treasure, now in the Berlin Museum, with pseudocoins whose freehand male busts have similar features, Greifenhagen, *Schmuckarbeiten*, 71, nos. 5–6, pl. 52, dated from the mid-6th to mid-7th century.

⁴² See in particular the area around the left hand and the articulation of the fruit. Note also the flatter and more linear treatment of the Richmond Ge in contrast to the fully modeled faces and wavy locks of hair on the Egyptian pieces. It should be noted that the Richmond pendant was supposedly found in Egypt and was given an Egyptian provenance by Ross and in the Charpentier catalogue; see above, note 1.

⁴³ B. Segall, *Katalog der Goldschmiede-Arbeiten* (Athens, 1938), 90, no. 102, pl. 30, a Medusa medallion from the Benaki Museum dated to the 2nd century A.D.; and A. Oliver, Jr., "Roman Jewelry," in *Jewelry: Ancient to Modern* (New York, 1980), 113–14, nos. 315–19, for several examples in the Walters Art Gallery.

⁴⁴ See B. M. Felletti Maj, "Intorno a una fibula aurea dalla necropoli longobarda di Nocera Umbra," *Commentari* 12 (1961), 3–11, figs. 1–3, for a fibula with a female bust resembling an empress from a Lombard tomb of the 7th century. For the Vandal example, see J. Heurgon, *Le trésor de Ténès* (Paris, 1958), 63 ff, pl. 1. For the South Russian examples, see Ross, *Cat. II*, 117–19, no. 166, A, pls. 79–80, where two clasps of a necklace are decorated with female busts; the necklace and its pendant are from the Olbia treasure which is dated to the early 5th century; see below.

crown. The Tyche decorating a pendant of a crown, now in Baltimore, is defined by the inscription in the exergue: KOSMIA.⁴⁵ The use of a Tyche type reflects the influence of reverse types on coins and medallions and the inscription underlines the function of the image, "comme garante de l'harmonie universelle reflétée dans la stabilité de l'Empire."⁴⁶ The other Tyche, on a gold roundel in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, holds a cornucopia and spear.⁴⁷ The dependency on coin types for the form and function of these allegorical images strengthens the case for the use of numismatic iconography for the reading of the Richmond pendant.

Finally, the design of the reverse side and that of the crosses on the front also provide telling comparisons. The four small crosses are each decorated with stylized leaves engraved in the spaces between the arms. Exactly the same type of cross with "palmettes" occurs on the reverse of an agate cameo pendant from a mid-seventh-century treasure.⁴⁸ While there is no exact parallel for the reverse, both the eight-pointed star and the stylized leaf ornament are not untypical in late antique metalwork. Several exquisite pieces of late Roman silver work are engraved with stars at their centers and chased with leaf designs.⁴⁹ The closest silver parallel is found on a fluted bowl from the fourth-century Mildenhall treasure, now in the British Museum, where a six-pointed star is inscribed in a roundel and filled with foliate motifs.⁵⁰ Seven of the outer radiating panels are also decorated with a leaf pattern executed in broad, shallow grooves with petals curving outward, away from the central groove or stem, just like the leaves on the pendant. This type of stylized geometric and vegetal ornament remained in vogue at least until the sixth century.⁵¹

⁴⁵ R. H. Randall, Jr., "Byzantine Jewelry," in *Jewelry: Ancient to Modern*, 415–17, no. 421; and P. Verdier, "Notes sur trois bijoux d'or byzantins," *CahArch* 11 (1960), 125–29, esp. 127.

⁴⁶ Verdier, op cit., 127.

⁴⁷ Ross, *Cat. II*, 31–32, no. 32, pl. 26.

⁴⁸ See Ross, *Cat. II*, 9, pl. 11, c, who attributes the treasure to Constantinople, and 33, no. 35, pl. 26, for a Maltese cross engraved against a hatched background, also dated to the 7th century.

⁴⁹ For a brief review, see D. E. Strong, *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate* (London, 1966), 196. For a recent discussion of this material, see E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum, F. Baratte, H. A. Cahn, et al., *Der spätromische Silberschatz von Kaiserburg* (Derendingen, 1984), 191–93, no. 60, fig. 106.

⁵⁰ K. S. Painter, *The Mildenhall Treasure* (London, 1977), 29, pl. 31.

⁵¹ For example, the eight-pointed star appears in the center of the Anastasius Dish (A.D. 491–518) from Sutton Hoo; see E. Kitzinger, "The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial V: The Silver," *An-*

For parallels in gold, we must turn to the back of an inlaid garnet pendant from the Olbia treasure in South Russia (Fig. 6), already noted for its use of two gold repoussé clasps with female busts.⁵² The dominant pattern is the stylized leaf ornament that fills the entire field and encloses a curvilinear lozenge with a central quatrefoil.⁵³ Not only is this leaf design very close to ours, but the use of punches to further articulate the design matches the treatment of the reverse of the Richmond pendant.⁵⁴

This last comparison is particularly significant in that it suggests an area of manufacture on the northeastern fringes of the empire, where the appearance of Ge in combination with the mechanical eightfold repetition of the imperial bust seems

tiquity 14 (1940), 40–63, pls. 16–18; and the stylized leaf ornament occurs on two silver dishes of the 6th century in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection: see M. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, I* (Washington, D.C., 1962), 7–9, no. 7, pls. 8–9.

⁵² Dated by Ross to the early 5th century; see above, note 44.

⁵³ Ross, *op. cit.*, describes these as four palm branches.

more likely than in the West.⁵⁵ In any case, the technique of pressed gold foil and the style of the coin imitations reflect a provenance outside the main centers of production. On the other hand, the conception of the entire pendant and its ornament clearly depends on models from these centers. The date of most of the closest parallels in medalllic jewelry, coin types, and Ge points to the late sixth century or early seventh century as a probable date for the Richmond pendant.

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⁵⁴ For another similar leaf pattern, see the reverse of a cross dated to the 5th century and attributed to Constantinople(?), Ross, *op. cit.*, 15, no. 10, pl. 17. See also the stamped foliate designs on the reverse of a pair of earrings in the Walters Art Gallery, see *Jewelry: Ancient to Modern*, 142, no. 405, color pl., p. 145, where it is dated to the 6th century and attributed to the Visigoths; and Weitzmann, *Age of Spirituality*, 314–15, no. 289, where it is considered to be Byzantine and a product of Constantinople.

⁵⁵ As further support of the proposed provenance, see Betti, *Oreficerie*, 217, no. 535, pl. 151, for a gold-leaf funerary crown stamped with an impression of a large bronze of Commodus (A.D. 183–191) that was found at Kertsch and is now in the Hermitage.